

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
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FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1330
INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN PRIORITY
AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY
AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY
CINCPAC HONOLULU HI PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ISLAMABAD 4402

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PK, PINT
SUBJ: POLITICAL SITUATION

1. PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO CONTINUES TO GIVE EVERY APPEARANCE OF REMAINING CONFIDENTLY IN CONTROL OF THE EVOLVING POLITICAL SITUATION. PPP SPONSORED PROCESSIONS WERE TAKEN OUT IN NUMEROUS CITIES AND TOWNS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY MAY FIRST AND WERE GIVEN PROMINENT COVERAGE ON THE NATIONAL NEWS BROADCASTS. FACT THAT PM WAS WILLING TO CALL FOR SUCH PROCESSIONS, AND THAT THEY COULD BE HELD WITHOUT MAJOR CONFRONTATIONS WITH PNA SUPPORTERS, IS FURTHER CONFIRMATION OF BHUTTO'S INCREASING CONFIDENCE.

2. POSITION ON NEGOTIATING FRONT HAS BECOME MURKIER. VOA REPORTED THIS MORNING, AND FOREIGN JOURNALISTS IN ISLAMABAD CONFIRM, THAT PIR PAGARO, ACTING PNA CHIEF, HAS SAID THAT
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QUESTIONS OF BHUTTO RESIGNATION AND NEW NATIONAL ELECTIONS ARE BOTH NEGOTIABLE. PIR SAHIB IS RAPIDLY ACQUIRING WELL-DESERVED REPUTATION AS UNRELIABLE SPOKESMAN FOR THE PNA. WE BELIEVE HIS STATEMENT THAT QUESTION OF ELECTIONS IS NEGOTIABLE DOES NOT REFLECT HIS COLLEAGUE'S VIEWS.

3. FURTHER MONKEY WRENCH HAS BEEN THROWN INTO NEGOTIATIONS

BY ASGHAR KHAN. THE AIR MARSHAL HAS RELEASED STATEMENT REITERATING HIS REFUSAL TO NEGOTIATE WITH BHUTTO UNTIL HIS THREE DEMANDS (NEW ELECTIONS, PM'S RESIGNATION AND NEW ELECTION COMMISSION) ARE MET. AIR MARSHAL ALSO CALLED ON THE PEOPLE TO CONTINUE AGITATION AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT. AT SAME TIME, HE RELEASED MESSAGED ADDRESSED TO "THE OFFICERS OF THE DEFENCE SERVICES OF PAKISTAN." IN THE MESSAGE, THE AIR MARSHAL CALLS ON THE OFFICERS NOT TO OBEY "UNLAWFUL" ORDERS. ACCORDING TO COPY OF STATEMENT WE HAVE SEEN, ASGHAR KHAN STATED THAT "EVERY ONE OF YOU MUST ASK YOURSELF WHETHER WHAT THE ARMY IS DOING IS "LAWFUL" AND IF YOUR CONSCIENCE TELLS YOU THAT IT IS NOT, AND IF YOU CARRY IT OUT, YOU WOULD BE GUILTY OF A GRAVE CRIME AGAINST YOUR COUNTRY AND PEOPLE." STATEMENT GOES ON TO SAY THAT "LET IT NOT BE SAID THAT THE PAKISTAN ARMED FORCES ARE A DEGENERATE POLICE FORCE FIT ONLY FOR KILLING UNARMED CIVILIANS."

4. IT WOULD APPEAR THAT WE ARE BEGINNING TO SEE THE FIRST SIGNS OF THE SPLIT IN THEIR RANKS THAT THE PNA HAS LONG FEARED. MUFTI MAHMUD, WHO IS NOW HOSPITALIZED IN PINDI WITH DIABETES AND A FOOT INFECTION, STILL TALKS ABOUT POSSIBLE NEGOTIATIONS. ASGHAR KHAN SEEMS TO BE ONCE AGAIN TAKING A LEAF OUT OF BHUTTO'S POLITICAL BOOK IN REFUSING TO NEGOTIATE. BHUTTO FOLLOWED THE SAME TACTIC WHEN HE REFUSED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ROUND TABLE DISCUSSIONS WITH AYUB IN 1969. DURING THE 1970 CAMPAIGN HE CONTINUALLY MADE THE POINT THAT HE WAS THE ONE OPPOSITION LEADER WHO HAD REFUSED TO TALK WITH THE "TRAITOR" AYUB.

5. IT IS DIFFICULT TO PREDICT HOW THE BHUTTO/PNA NEGOTIATING CON-
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FRONTATION WILL WORK ITSELF OUT. ONE CAN FORESEE THE POSSIBILITY OF A PNA SETTLEMENT (WITHOUT ASGHAR KAHN'S CONCURRENCE) WITH THE PM. IT IS AN OPEN QUESTION WHETHER THE OTHER PNA LEADERS WOULD AGREE TO SUCH A PROCEUDRE WHICH WOULD HIGHLIGHT ASGHAR'S ROLE AS THE ONLY OPPOSITION LEADER REFUSING TO DEAL WITH BHUTTO. ONE FACT THAT EMERGES FROM THIS INCREASINGLY COMPLEX NEGOTIATING SITUATION, WITH THE OPPOSITION LEADERS ISSUING CONTRADICTORY STATEMENTS AND PROBABLY LOOKING INCREASINGLY INEFFECTIVE IN THE EYES OF SOME OF THEIR FOLLOWERS, IS THAT DESPITE HIS TACTICAL BLUNDERS OVER THE PAST MONTHS, BHUTTO HAS NOT LOST ANY OF HIS ABILITIES OF FINDING WAYS TO TURN SPECIFIC POLITICAL SITUATIONS TO HIS OWN POLITICAL ADVANTAGE, AT LEAST FOR THE SHORT-TERM.
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